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THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE STRUGGLING CLASSES. I A READING COURSE FOR MINISTERS

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The following chapters introduce to the readers of the BIBLICAL WORLD the second Reading Course for the current year. The practical nature of this course is easily recognized in its title. The spirit of Jesus has not been confined in its working to the organized Christian church as an agency. Especially in our own time have there been men and organizations outside the church who are as active and efficient in their ministry to the needs of the depressed classes as the church itself. Settlements, charity organizations, and countless other agencies, although manned in large measure by Christian people, have been contributing extensively to the needs and the uplift of humanity. Have these organizations robbed the church of its legitimate work or has the church not yet reached that full appreciation of its task which would be expressed in a spirit of universal co-operation and mutual appreciation and responsibility? The Christian ministers and the Christian individuals who constitute the church must decide this question. It is hoped that the course will not only give food for thought but principles for intelligent and helpful action.

Introduction

Scope of the Course

I. The *classes* considered in this course are limited to those persons who are depressed below a reasonable standard, or who are in imminent danger of dropping below such a standard at any crisis.

1. The unskilled wage-earners who are ordinarily unorganized; these form a reservoir of supply for those lower down.
2. The family and persons already dependent:
 - a) Abnormal (insane, epileptic, feeble-minded).

b) The defective (crippled, blind, deaf).

c) The aged.

d) Children.

e) The sick and injured, etc.

3. The vicious and criminal, or anti-social.

II. The ameliorative *agencies* and methods are classified as:

1. Palliative and remedial (charitology).
2. Repressive and protective (criminalistics and penology).
3. Preventive and reconstructive.
4. Social politics (a system of measures of public and private methods of improving the lot of wage-earners who are not dependent on charity).

III. The church in relation to those social institutions and methods is discussed under several heads, in the order of historical stages:

1. The primitive and mediaeval church.

- a) The church as a conventicle or simple community, as in primitive Christianity and the Protestants under persecution in Roman Catholic countries.
- b) The church dominant (charity in the Middle Ages).
- c) The transition to specialization and secularization of charity (period of the Reformation and later).

2. The gradual separation of charity from the church and specialization of ameliorative methods under:

- a) Charity—private, church, and public.
- b) Social politics; a system based on legal rights with legal guaranties, as organized labor and legislation, these corresponding to the democratic as distinguished from the patriarchal methods.

3. The opportunity and obligation of the church in our day:

- a) For direct and organized agencies supported and directed by itself—as the Inner Mission of Germany.
- b) For co-operation with other voluntary association to promote the common welfare—as, for example, the Charity Organization Society.
- c) For selection and training of workers, both paid and voluntary.
- d) For scientific and popular education in social service and social legislation.
- e) For stimulating the raising of money for voluntary associations and even for public ends.
- f) For cultivating the conscience in relation to social duty and inspiring this conscience with fear and enthusiasm and conviction of religion; this is the supreme need of mankind and one which the church alone can meet.

Suggestions to the Reader

Object of these studies.—The purpose of these studies is to make real to ourselves and to others the value and power of Christianity in the presence of those tragic facts of human history which seem to contradict the very idea of a good and all-powerful God; and to learn from history how to avoid errors in spirit and method, and how to apply the Christian law of love more effectively in our own times. This study is not merely to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but rather to build up character and equip us for useful service, and worthily to represent our Lord in his work for humanity.

Method.—The study will be most profitable to those who follow these directions with care, zeal, patience, and conscientiousness: (1) study the “pre-view” of the course to anticipate the direction of the journey; (2) study the main heads of the special topic lesson under consideration; (3) read and make brief abstracts of the books cited on each subject; (4) think over the points learned; (5) discuss the facts with others; a group or club organized for this purpose adds greatly to the value of the study; (6) go back to the books for more exact statement when uncertain or if your view is challenged; (7) sum up the results of your reading and thought on each topic and review the reading and discussions; (8) think out and write down any vital principle or suggestion for conduct which may be brought out; (9) do not neglect to put in practice at once some part of the Christian duty, enforced by this study. “If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know.” Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge.

Points for investigation.—In all the reading and discussion be on the lookout for facts bearing on: (1) the human need, sorrow, sin, pain, misery, and despair of the neighbor; (2) the motive of the giver; (3) the resources of friends or services or material means; (4) the methods of administration; (5) mistakes and successes, shown by results; (6) principles for our guidance; (7) inspiring personalities, their deeds and words and story. Write out what you have learned from your reading on each point, look it over, and think of some way of putting your knowledge to use—at once, this week. Knowledge which does not inspire and guide to service is guilt. To him who knows duty and does it not, to him it is sin. Yet ignorance is also sin—when it can be cured.

Books Required for the Course

For orientation: H. Münsterberg, *Vocation and Learning*.

Historical basis: C. S. Loch, *Charity and Social Life*.

Economic science: Marshall, Wright, and Field, *Outlines of Economics and Materials for the Study of Elementary Economics*; Taussig, *Principles of Economics* (advanced).

Political science: Wilson, *The State*; or Hart, *Actual Government*.

Sociology: Ellwood, *Sociology in Its Psychological Aspects* (general); Small, *General Sociology* (advanced).

Ethics: Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*; Ross, *Sin and Society*.

Psychology and education: Angell, *Psychology*; James, *Talks to Teachers*.

Pauperism and crime: Henderson, *Introduction to the Study of the Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent Classes*.

General reference book: Bliss, *New Encyclopedia of Social Reform*.

Part I. Historical

1. What Our Christian Ancestors Have Done to Help the Man Who Is Down; a Historical Sketch

REQUIRED READING¹

Loch, *Charity and Social Life*, chaps. iii–xiv.

ADDITIONAL LITERATURE

In German we have Uhlhorn, *Die Christliche Liebestätigkeit* (Lutheran), the first volume translated under the title *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*; and Ratzinger, *Die kirchliche Armenpflege* (Catholic).

In French, the great work of Léon Lallemand, *Histoire de la charité*.

The spirit of God, who is love, has been omnipresent in all the works of creation and providence. In no age or

race has he been without a witness in the gifts of nature, grace, and human affection. Even down among the animals there is love of offspring and mates, mutual help, as among ants and birds, and self-sacrifice even unto pain and death. Men have been cruel, selfish, oppressive, mutually destructive; but they have also manifested sympathy, altruism, noble service to each other. The Christian traces evil to a bad human choice, and good to the working of the Holy Spirit; but mystery will remain in spite of our best thinking.

Many of the facts, dark and bright, may be found in Loch's chapters cited above. Keep in mind constantly the

¹ For the *required* reading I have selected the beautiful book of my dear friend Dr. C. S. Loch, *Charity and Social Life*, as on the whole the best for my purpose. My dissent will be noted on some points. We do not always agree and Dr. Loch is likely to be right.

seven "Points for Investigation" mentioned under "Hints for the Student." We must not only read but study, or we lose all; and "be not hearers only, but doers." Remember who it was that built on sand and who on solid rock.

2. Primitive Christianity and the Church before the Papacy, that is, to 590 A.D.

REQUIRED READING

Read first of all the New Testament, with references to Old Testament. The first Christians had the Old Testament for their Bible, and it is rich in lessons of help to the poor (see Kent, *Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents*). Then Loch, *Charity and Social Life*, chap. xv-xviii.

ADDITIONAL LITERATURE

Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*.
Uhlhorn, *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church* (excellent).
Mathews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*.
Henderson, *Development of Doctrine in the Epistles*.

The writings of the early Christian leaders, translated, are found in the Ante-Nicene Library. As these are original sources and since they have the freshness and life of contemporary documents, they should be read whenever possible. See also Schaff, *History of the Church*.

Fundamental principle.—The very essence of Christianity is love. The gospel is a message of hope to mankind, even to the fallen. The life of Jesus dominated the first disciples, and when he was taken from their sight they at once organized a community of kindness and mutual help. The first churches were not metaphysical debating clubs but real charity organization societies. A primary duty of bishops and deacons

was to remember the poor and help them with discrimination, liberality, and personal influence. Every grown person was commanded to work for his own living and for the means of helping the weak.

The need.—In all ages there have been needy persons—the neglected child, the orphan, the poor widow, the cripple, the victims of robbers and oppressors, of fire and earthquake, of storm and flood, of vice and ignorance, the aged, the insane, the idiotic, the sick, the friendless dying. In the Roman Empire natural evils were intensified by slavery, oppressive usury, luxury, at the cost of conquered provinces, unjust and unequal taxation, fraud in high places, and enervating vices.

The motives of the givers.—These are not always possible to discover; but, so far as genuine Christianity governed conduct, the motive was "faith working by love," and pity ran to man and gratitude to God as source of all good. All who shared in redemption desired the salvation of others. But there were hypocrites from the beginning, as Ananias; there was gluttony at the love feasts; there was pinching avarice; and later men thought to compound for their sins by alms to the poor.

The sources of funds.—There were at first only the voluntary offerings of the believers. Later, in some countries, there was also a monthly payment to a common fund. Still later, as the rich poured into the church, vast estates were given to the bishop for pious and charitable uses. The custom of almsgiving was ancient and often unwise and hurtful. Gradually the tithe was adopted from the old dispensation.

The methods of administration.—The first step in organization of the church was to elect assistants to the bishop or pastor (elder) in the work of caring for the poor (Acts. chap. 6). During subsequent centuries, the bishop retained the responsibility of general oversight in the distribution of relief. Until the church was recognized by law, under Constantine (fourth century), there were few institutions. The funds were collected and distributed in the congregation. But when the bishop was set over lower pastors in dioceses, and the church became wealthy and honored, houses of hospitality, asylums for strangers, for the sick, and for all classes of the indigent began to be founded.

Mistakes and successes.—Error and sin taint the holiest works. Sometimes laziness was fostered by splendid largesses, and men became parasites. Then, as now, men gave alms to be seen of men, and some imagined they could even deceive God. In the care of the sick the medical and nursing service could be no better than the science of the age could supply. Yet multitudes of helpless persons were relieved, love was cultivated, faith was demonstrated by good works, and the world came to accept Christianity for its moral worth.

Principles.—Among the sacred rules published from apostolic times were these: He that will not work must not eat out of the church funds; true neighbor love does not reject the alien, the slave, nor even the criminal; character is the end of all service to man; relief must be discriminating, not only to economize funds, but to give real help to the beneficiary; "the gift with-

out the giver is bare" and the highest service is personal and wise friendship.

Inspiring personalities.—These ages exhibit a galaxy of shining examples of charity. Jesus leads the host, and all who hold an honored place among his followers have shone in deeds of mercy.

3. The Church in the Ages of Papal Dominance to the Reformation (590-1517 A.D.)

REQUIRED READING

Loch, *Charity and the Social Life*, chaps. xviii-xxvi.

ADDITIONAL LITERATURE

Schaff, or some other good history of the Christian church, for the general story. Ashley, *English Economic History and Theory*, Part II, especially chap. v. pp. 305-38.

Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, Vol. I.

Keeping constantly in mind the seven "Points for Investigation," (p. 101), the works cited may be read on the following topics, suggested by Ashley:

a) The story of parish relief, which gradually declined and, in the twelfth century, almost disappeared. The attempts of Charlemagne to improve relief methods.

b) The monasteries and their needy clients: their rise, their service, their wealth, their decline. (See Emerton, *Introduction to the Middle Ages*.)

c) The hospitals: their task, their specialization, their administration.

d) The crafts and fraternities.

e) Private and individual charity.

f) The plague of vagrancy: its causes, extent, evils, the inability of private charity to control beggars, and the necessity of legislation and police control

to keep the mendicants and robbers in order.

g) The beginnings of charity organization before Luther, by the Catholics in cities of Germany, and by the Humanists (as Luis Vives).

h) Mediaeval doctrines of charity; in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa*.

4. The Charity of the Churches since the Reformation

REQUIRED READING

Loch, *Charity and the Social Life*, chaps. xxvi-xxxviii.

ADDITIONAL LITERATURE

C. R. Henderson, *Modern Methods of Charity*.

Ashley, *English Economic History and Theory*, Part II, chap. V, pp. 338-77.

Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*.

There are many references to authorities and sources in all these books.

Webb, "The Prevention of Destitution," *Survey*, May 23, 1914, p. 227.

Henderson, "World Currents in Charity," *Annals of Amer. Acad. Pol. and Soc. Science*, May, 1903; and "Social Solidarity in France," *Amer. Jour. of Sociol.*, September, 1905.

During the Middle Ages charity was under church control. The clergy taught the people to give, collected the funds, supervised the administration, made charity a dominant social belief. Works of charity included not only relief of misery but also the establishment of schools, the building of bridges, the making of roads, the keeping of hotels.

The first break with this order came when business men and magistrates discovered that the clergy could not control mendicants. Beggars swarmed over Europe like locusts and consumed

the products of industry in idleness, plundered travelers in dark places, and threatened peace and order everywhere. The public authorities at first adopted severe repressive measures with beggars, some of them cruel beyond modern belief—flogging, branding with hot iron, slitting noses, cutting off ears, public exposure in stocks, expulsion from the land. Then the fears and compassion of the people reacted against these severities and they continued their indiscriminate alms for fear the poor would perish or rise in revolt.

The next step was to organize all the charities of the city or district under one direction, the city being districted and almoners being appointed in each district as visitors, with central administration. This began in Germany and the Netherlands before the Reformation. Even in France similar measures were taken. Up to this time the funds were not raised by taxation but by the free gifts of the people—collections at church or home, at weddings or funerals and legacies. Experience in all lands proved that these voluntary gifts were unreliable, irregular, spasmodic, often failing when most needed. Hence England, first of all nations, in 1601 enacted a poor law, which in the seventeenth century passed over to the Colonies and so became common in the states of our Union. Christianity had for centuries taught the people that it is the duty of all the strong to help the distressed who need help; but the church and private associations were unable to give effective organization to this belief, and so Christian peoples gradually laid this task upon the state which is the organ of the whole people. When the church

was split up into many sects, it was all the more evident that in their divided condition they could not meet the vast need. The Catholic countries resisted this regulation of relief by public legal authority longer than the Protestant lands, but gradually their governments are assuming responsibility. In 1905 France led the Latin nations in the enactment of a real poor law. Italy and Spain are moving in the same direction.

This tendency has been resisted by many of the best and wisest leaders of the Charity Organization Society in England and America; but the world-tide is too strong for them. Private and church charity may well supplement public relief, but can never be a substitute for it.

Another change must be noted: the modern discrimination between "dependents" and "working men" (wage-earners). This distinction was not clear during the centuries when multitudes of laborers were serfs or descendants of servile families and servile in spirit. The modern industry and the march of higher ideals, of self-assertion, a demand for justice and legally defined rights have taken the place of charitable relief in great measure. Hence we have

differentiated "social politics" from charity and poor law, and the two must not be confused; "social politics" relates to independent wage-earners, charity and poor law to the dependent.

Topics for Discussion

1. Have you a Charity Organization Society? If not, why not? If you have, what are the churches doing to co-operate with it? Does not good citizenship require of Christians co-operation with their fellow-workers and public officials?

2. What do you know about your jail, your county poorhouse, your relief agencies? See Byington, *What Social Workers Should Know about Their Own Communities*.

3. What have you learned from your reading and discussion which reveals duties, needed effort, organization, gifts, services?

4. What Bible texts have you found for sermons and church conferences and prayer-meetings which disclose neglected duties and appeal to the social conscience?

5. What can *you* do to help? Are you not a steward of the truth you have learned? What is the duty of a trustee of knowledge?

6. What bodies of knowledge are most urgently needed by Christian leaders in a community? (This question will be considered in the next contribution to this series. It is already partly answered in this study.)

Traveling libraries each containing the books of one of the following reading courses will be ready for distribution this month: *The Psychology of Religion*; *The Educational Work of the Church*; *The Efficient Church*; *The Character of Jesus in the Light of Modern Scholarship*; *The Religion of the Hebrews*; *The Expansion of Christianity in the Twentieth Century*; *The Apostolic Age*. Address the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.